DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 174 573 SP 014 176

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TITLE Prescriptive Inservice Education.
PUB DATE 77
NOTE 12p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Diagnostic Teaching; *Improvement Programs; Individualized Programs; Informal Assessment; *Inservice Teacher Education; Interinstitutional Cooperation; *Skill Development; *Teacher Evaluation; Teaching Skills

ABSTRACT

A small percentage of teachers need an individualized inservice program designed according to diagnosed needs. Through the cooperative efforts of the school system and the university a model for delivering diagnostic-prescriptive inservice can be developed. Two essential components of the prescriptive inservice model are the inservice associate (consultant) and the inservice laboratory. Phase I of the proposed inservice program involves the assessment of teaching skills for a specified group of teachers and the designing of recommended prescriptive programs. Phase II focuses on the development and/or improvement of specified competencies, and Phase III involves the evaluation of each teacher's measurable progress. (Author)

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PRESCRIPTIVE INSERVICE EDUCATION

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PRESCRIPTIVE INSERVICE EDUCATION

Abstract

The traditional inservice education efforts are not sufficient to meet the needs of a small percentage of teachers. These teachers need an individualized inservice program designed according to ddiagnosed needs. Through the cooperative efforts of the school system and the university a model for delivering diagnostic-prescriptive inservice can be developed. Two essential components of the prescriptive inservice model are the inservice associate (consultant) and the inservice laboratory. Phase I, of the proposed inservice program, involves the assessment of teaching skills for a specified group of teachers and the designing of recommended prescriptive programs. Phase II focuses on the development and/or improvement of specified competencies, and Phase III involves the evaluation of each teacher's measurable progress.

PRESCRIPTIVE INSERVICE EDUCATION

Principals and supervisors frequently observe teachers and are in the best position to determine the quality of general teacher performance. They can help most teachers individually through demonstration lessons and by providing suggestions and recommendations. Also, inservice programs and additional college courses will enable the majority of teachers to develop and maintain the skills and competencies expected of present day teachers. However, for a small percentage of teachers the usual staff development efforts are not sufficient to meet their extensive needs for improvement of existing skills and development of new teaching competencies. The extensive inservice needs of this group of least able teachers call for individualized evaluation, prescription, and training approaches.

Prescriptive inservice is based on the assumption that teaching competency can be defined in measurable terms. This writer agrees with Johnson's position that teaching should be defined in terms of what teachers ought to do (1). If school principals and supervisors have a logical and defensible rationale for evaluating teaching, then, decisions can be made relative to "which" teachers need "what" training.

Most school systems do not have the personnel nor the materials to provide an individualized inservice program for teachers. In fact, it may be advantageous for a school system to seek assistance outside the local district so teachers will feel less threatened (2).

Schools may be able to obtain this particular type of assistance through teacher centers; however, universities are best equipped to fulfill this type of inservice need. Agne and Ducharme's proposed model for inservice collaboration between college/university and school/communities provides an excellent delivery system for inservice training assistance. They propose that school systems contract with a university's Center for Inservice Education for specified inservice training services to be provided by designated faculty and staff members. These staff members would have a varied repertoire of skills plus they would have access to the materials and resources of the university. Faculty workloads would be adjusted to allow for time spent in field service activities and funds paid by the schools for contract services would be used to support the Center and to reimburse the university for use of faculty and staff (3).

Rationale For Prescriptive Inservice

In education, as in other professional fields such as medicine, we attempt to discover the problem, determine the probable cause, prescribe specific steps to alleviate the problem, and evaluate to determine the degree of positive change following treatment. The same logic appears to be valid in assisting the teacher who is not meeting the expectations and the responsibilities of his or her teaching position. Improvement in teaching competence is a more desirable alternative than dismissal. Dismissal should be considered only after exhaustive efforts have been made to raise a teacher's competence to a satisfactory level of performance.

Due to the pressure of the accountability movement and the rising consciousness of caring professionals, incompetent teaching, by even a

small percentage of the teachers presently employed, can no longer be tolerated. School systems are responsible for providing appropriate inservice and other opportunities for the teachers to become competent; yet, most schools are not equipped to provide this service. The assistance of professionals skilled in teacher training and a resource of training materials are needed to help school systems fulfill their inservice training needs.

Prescriptive Inservice Model

Two essential components of the prescriptive inservice model are the inservice associate (consultant) and the inservice laboratory. Inservice associates are individuals who have experience in classroom teaching and teacher training in addition to expertise in teaching methodology and teacher evaluation. The inservice laboratory is a space designated by the local school system and equipped with materials and equipment needed for inservice training activities. These are supplied cooperatively by the university's Inservice Education Center and by the local educational agency.

Schools wishing to secure prescriptive inservice training assistance make their request to the Center's director. A contract for services is negotiated between the school system representative and the director of the Inservice Education Center. Phase I, of the prescriptive inservice program, involves the assessment of teaching skills for a specified group of teachers and the designing of recommenced prescriptive programs. Phase II focuses on the development and/or improvement of specified competencies and Phase III involves the evaluation of each teacher's measurable progress. Data obtained in

the Phase I assessments are used to compute the estimated cost to carry out each teacher's prescriptive inservice program. Individual contracts are then negotiated for teachers who will continue in the program after Phase I.

Phase I - Assessment of Teacher Performance

A time is scheduled for the inservice associate to meet with the school principal and the classroom teacher to clarify the procedures and responsibilities and to assure the teacher that his rights and professional integrity will be protected. Since this program is designed to help teachers it should be separate from the local educational agency's personnel assessment program. Therefore, all data and records acrued during the prescriptive inservice process should become the property of the teacher. A written agreement specifying procedures, responsibilities, and assurances should be made and signed by the teacher, principal, and inservice associate. The written agreement may be amended to include subsequent phases if the prescriptive inservice program is continued after Phase I. This written agreement is separate from the contractual agreement between the school system and the University's Inservice Center.

Each classroom teacher participating in the prescriptive inservice program is observed at least three times during a three week period by the inservice associate. Teaching performance is diagnosed and a summative report delineating the findings is prepared. Specifically, the procedures are as follows:

1. The inservice associate prepares a report for each observation and the teacher completes a self-evaluation report.
2. After a minimum of three observations, a conference is scheduled to evaluate and discuss the inservice associate's observations and the teacher's self-evaluation reports. The school principal may participate in the conference.
3. A written report for Phase I is completed by the inservice associate within one week following the conference. The report includes a summary of the observations, specific objectives and recommendations, and a prescribed inservice program.
4. The classroom teacher and his or her principal jointly decide whether or not the prescriptive inservice will be continued or terminated. The cost for an individual teacher's perscriptive inservice program will be based on the nature and number of competencies to be developed.

Phase II - Prescriptive Competency Development

Prescriptive inservice places accountability for professional improvement with the teacher. The teacher is made aware of what needs to be done and is provided with the means for accomplishment. A written agreement which fully describes procedures and responsibilities relative to prescriptive competence development (Phase II) and competency evaluation (Phase III) should be formalized and signed by the participants. Suggested elements of Phase II are as follows:

1. The teacher's schedule must be arranged to facilitate program participation. A number of teachers from different schools may

be involved in prescriptive inservice; therefore, the principal's cooperation in adjusting teachers' schedules is crucial to the success and efficiency of the program.

2. A centrally located space within the district must be designated by the school system for use as an inservice laboratory. A collection of teacher training materials (for example, modules, kits, audio-tapes, video-tapes, films) is placed in the laboratory. Equipment, such as, video tape players, video recorders, projectors, etc. also would be housed in the laboratory. These resources would be furnished jointly by the university and the local school system. Teachers may work in the laboratory individually or in small groups. Certain materials may be checked out on a loan basis to teachers.
3. The inservice associate is available in the inservice laboratory during scheduled hours of operation to help teachers with their prescribed programs. This assistance may be in the way of helping a teacher locate and use a certain resource or it may be one-to-one counseling and/or instruction. If several teachers are working on development of the same skill, the inservice associate may arrange for them to work together. Occasionally there may be a need for structuring a series of group discussions, seminars, or mini-courses, for teachers working on common objectives. The inservice associate may periodically assist teachers in their respective classrooms.

Phase III - Post-Assessment and Evaluation

Evaluative date is systematically gathered by the inservice associate and the teacher throughout the prescriptive inservice program.

Every effort is made to apply quantitative assessment schemes when applicable; however, subjective data also may be collected and given consideration. By comparing the results of the pre-assessment with the results of the post-assessment an estimate of the teacher's improvement may be determined. Recommended procedures are as follows:

1. The teacher may rate himself or herself as various components of the prescribed program are completed.
2. Each teacher is encouraged to have students complete questionaires and rating scales which evaluate the teacher's classroom performance.
3. The teacher's performance on skill tests and simulation activities is rated and evaluated by the inservice associate.
4. The inservice associate periodically observes and evaluates the teacher's classroom performance relative to the demonstration of specific competencies.
5. The teacher and inservice associate review all evaluative data collected during the prescriptive inservice program. A final evaluation report is then prepared by the inservice associate and given to the teacher. A copy of the report may be given to the school principal.
6. A report describing the teacher's participation in the prescriptive inservice program is given to the school principal. Evaluative data is not included in this report.

Conclusions

If inservice education for teachers is a process analogous to the teaching/learning process, then, inservice leaders should use

methods and procedures demonstrated to be sound teaching pedagogy. An effective model for teaching (i.e., specification of objectives - pre-assessment-prescription of learning experiences-evaluation) can serve as a prototype for designing an effective approach to inservice education. Some teachers need an individually tailored inservice program to help them to become professionally competent.

The numbers of teachers performing unsatisfactorily in a school system is small, but to the local administrators the problem is very large. These teachers often show little improvement even though they participate in inservice programs and enroll in graduate courses. The prescriptive inservice model proposed here in represents one way the university may render a valuable service to local educational agencies and to those teachers who need special help.

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